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ABSTRACT

Three articles deal with primary school English instruction. W. J. Jackson examines some possible sets of objectives for a language arts program--e.g., development through language of creative and reasoning faculties, awareness of language characteristics and of writing models useful in contemporary society, achievement of expected terminal and intermediate behavioral goals, and development of the componential parts of particular language arts skills, such as reading for comprehension. He also offers thoughts on setting up programs to highlight critical language areas. J. Tosh describes an approach to language and grammar that involves teachers in three stages: (1) determining whether children can recognize various uses of language; (2) determining whether the students were able or could be taught to describe the uses; and (3) encouraging students to produce varieties of language appropriate to certain purposes. M. Cook and D. Valentine describe their experience using a children's novel, "Carrigmore Castle," as a basis for class discussion, composition, dramatic interpretation, and supplementary reading. (LH)

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ENGLISH IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

AN APPROACH TO LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR

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If you are reading this in the hope of a solution you had better stop now. There is no solution. This is just an account of some work done by a group of five primary school teachers and me at Craigie College, offered in the tentative hope that it may provide some classification and guidance to primary teachers in the area of English work which 'Primary Education in Scotland' 1965 calls 'The Development of Formal Skills,' and which used to be known, before the term became a four-letter word, as 'grammar.'

Statements like the Memorandum's "Course books may provide material for teaching the conventions of written English: but the practice of indiscriminately following the exercises in such books . . . results in disappointingly little transfer of what has been practised," and "grammar in the traditional sense . . . has contributed very little to this end" (the development of fluent and varied expression), have created a sense of unease and even guilt in some teachers about what they are doing in this area, have provoked an indignant and reactionary attitude in others, and in many have created a vacuum which cryptic remarks in the Memorandum like, "the more modern approach . . . shows how the choice of words and constructions varies according to the situation and purpose of the speaker or the writer," and "The consideration of sentence structure, which is a more sophisticated process, should also be associated with pattern and function," have done little to dispel, combat or fill.

The Craigie group met at weekly intervals in the first few months of last year to discuss, devise and test in their classrooms, material and ways of considering it which might profitably be used in Primary V to VII, to contribute to 'the development of fluent and varied expression,' which, the Memorandum suggests, is the fundamental aim in dealing with the formal aspects of written English. We concentrated on the 'varied' rather than the 'fluent' as this appears to be an aspect which suffers greater neglect and causes more puzzlement. In preliminary discussion we agreed to work in three stages. In Stage I we would try to determine whether children *are aware of* varied uses of language; in Stage II, an analytical stage, whether they were able, or could be enabled to *describe* as well as recognise varieties; and in Stage III whether and how they could be encouraged and helped to *produce* varieties of language appropriate to certain purposes.

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Stage I

In this we selected a number of strongly marked passages, read them to the children, and asked them to indicate in fairly general terms the possible sources of the passages. Typical examples were:

1. Scotland is a small country. It has a population of five million and is part of the British Isles. Edinburgh is its capital.
2. A railway truck contained 10 tons 5 cwt. of coal. 5 tons 17 cwt. were transferred to a coalman's lorry. How much coal was left in the truck?
3. Come, Mother, come.
   Pat has a cod.
   Ann ran for Mother.
   See, Mother, Pat has a cod.

Answers varied from the general, e.g. 'A geography book' to the almost embarrassingly specific, "Holmes Comprehensive Arithmetic Book so-and-so." There were a very few suggestions, of course, showing incomprehension or plain lunacy, but the group was satisfied that the children were able to recognise varieties and enjoyed playing the game, and some of the teachers even tried it in Primary III classes with satisfactory results. This game of spotting the source can continue to be used as a means of making the children more sensitive in their awareness of variety. Four general points which might help are:

1. Choose real pieces of text. There are plenty available and the children will produce many themselves.
2. The 'difficulty' can also be varied by choosing texts which are less markedly different in kind; working from the difference between an arithmetic book and the Bible *towards* the difference between a 'Times' report and a 'Daily Mirror' one.
3. An interesting variation is to 'doctor' passages by inserting incongruous items and inviting the class to detect them. A crude example:

   Come, Mother, come.
   Pat has a cod.
   Ann ran for Mother.
   See, Mother, Pat has acquired a specimen of a food fish of the northern seas.

Stage II

This began when we asked the children to give reasons for their choice of sources. These were, as we expected, based mainly on the vocabulary of the texts. A history choice, e.g. would be justified by 'Because it says 1295' or a geography one by 'Because it says Scotland, the British Isles and Edinburgh,' and here it became clear that there was scope and need for a good deal of teaching about aspects of vocabulary. By comparing two texts, e.g.

"Scotland made a treaty with France and they agreed to help each other against England which was the enemy of them both"

and

"Scotland lies to the north of England which is separated from France by the waters of the English Channel,"

children can be made to see that very often the words which matter are not the big obvious things like the place names, but other items like 'north' and 'treaty,' and, most important, words used along with other words. This sort of activity seems to promote two useful ends—the habit of close reading, and the reinforcement of the importance of context in language. We devised exercises to supplement this, e.g.

England		England
treaty	and	climate
enemy		crops.

suggest two different contexts. Reading the lists from the top down, how far do we have to go before we become aware of this? We can make it more interesting by writing, e.g.

England	England	England
border	border	border
cattle	cattle	cattle
raid	climate	
treaty	pasture	rhyme

and so on. At what point do the distinctions begin to reveal themselves? How long can we keep the clusters in doubt? Could we add a word which would change the context which is emerging? Can the children devise their own clusters to (a) reveal the contexts as quickly as possible? (b) conceal them as long as possible? Their ingenuity is surprising.

At this stage it became obvious that we would have to adopt, for our own as well as for the children's use, some sort of grid for the examination of variety which went further than just vocabulary items, and in this we were indebted to some suggestions which Mr W. Currie of Jordanhill had made to the group in a lecture and subsequent discussion. It seemed sensible to consider the texts from (1) Vocabulary, (2) Substantial, (3) Grammatical and (4) Contextual, aspects.

The *vocabulary* aspect we had already investigated, so we moved on to *substance*. This had already arisen in the sort of texts we had been using, e.g.

A railway truck contained 10 tons 5 cwt. of coal. 5 tons 17 cwt. were transferred to a coalman's lorry. How much coal was left in the truck?

In such an example it is clear that clues to the source are to be found in the way that the marks are set down on the paper. '5 tons 17 cwt.,' e.g. instead of 'Five tons, seventeen hundredweights' helps to mark the particular nature of this text. We chose and worked with many others — advertisements, public notices, newspapers small advertisements and children's comics are prolific sources—and, since this sort of substantial flexibility is used for purposes ranging from the practical right through to the most sophisticated literary effects, it seems worth our attention. Exercises to improve their awareness of this and to let them experiment with the exploitation of it are not difficult to devise and are of course fundamentally concerned with the traditional worries about spelling and punctuation. You can't beat the DRINKA PINTA MILKA DAY people — so why not join them? The slogan is effective

after all, only when we know the standard orthography.

The *grammatical* aspect was one which we could, of course, by no means exhaust, but which raised a number of interesting points and thoughts. Again we began from texts which we had already used, selecting ones which necessarily directed the children's attention to grammatical considerations, e.g.

" In the tract of land between Lakes Huron, Erie and Ontario are many fruit farms. As we move from Ontario into Manitoba the climate and scenery change "

and

" Fish and shoot in the nature reserves of Cazorla. Sample the charms of Granada or take a trip to the lakes of Sierra Nevada. Drive through the olive groves to Valldemosa."

The children readily detected that the second was some sort of advertisement, and as the vocabulary and substantial elements in the texts are similar, they offered grammatical evidence " Because the second one is telling you what to do," e.g. in short the most obvious factor here is in the mood of the verb. Similarly verb tense provides a clue to the distinction between a historical and geographical passage in many cases, and the voice of the verb is very often an important consideration in writing of a scientific or technological kind, and this provides opportunities for consideration of these things with a class in a context which is meaningful and relevant, rather than in the arbitrary exercises in voice and tense conversions, characteristic of many language text-books. The group concluded that the grammar of the verb seems to be a much more useful and relevant concern to primary children than the practice of identifying and labelling parts of speech and parsing nouns because this seems to be comparatively easy, and leaving verbs unparsed because it seems to be more difficult, which is the prevailing approach to what grammar teaching is currently done in primary schools. The material we dealt with involved us also in the need to come to terms with the nature and function of the adjective, but we would hesitate to draw up a list of grammatical priorities based on our particular experience. The real point is that the priorities will make themselves clear to a class and teacher working in this way, because they will arise from the nature of the material under consideration and the needs of the children when they are involved actively in the examination and production of appropriately varied language. Further illustration of this will be given in the section on Stage III.

The *contextual* aspect was the next one we considered, with a view to helping the class to an awareness of the fact that language varies according to not only the subject matter, but the people who are using it, their relationship, their purposes, and perhaps their mood. We gave the children a few very short texts, e.g.

1. Come out and draw it on the board, then.
2. I want you to take two of these tablets every hour.
3. Get those buttons and boots polished,

and invited them simply to say who was talking to whom, with some evidence for their answers from the language of the text. We added a further dimension to this by giving them a second set,

1. I'll give you exactly ten seconds to own up.
2. I am afraid I prescribed the wrong tablets, Mr Jones.
3. Only another two miles to go, lads,

telling them that the participants were the same as in the first set and inviting them to identify the speaker's mood, with again supporting evidence from the language used. This led to profitable discussion in some classes of alternative words and structures which might have been used had the mood, purpose and relationship of the participants been different. We even tried out a small exam paper which might be a substitute for, or a complement to, the usual interpretation passage.

LANGUAGE STUDY PAPER

Examine the passage below and answer the questions on it, giving reasons for your answers.

Don't you know this is a one-way street, Madam?

1. Who said this?
2. To whom was it said?
3. Where was it said?
4. What was the speaker's intention?
5. What mood was the speaker in?
6. From the information you have given in your answers write a short description of the incident and situation in which the words were said.

In the event this was not a success because the children tended to support their answers by

reasons drawn from the situation which the text revealed rather than the language of the text itself, e.g.

1. A policeman—because a lady had driven up a one-way street.

But the teachers in the group felt that this was because they had not had enough time to practise and re-inforce the kind of exercises we had been doing in the way they would have done had this been normal class-work, continued over a period at the pace of the class rather than the exigencies of the time which we had available.

Stage III

The production side gave considerable satisfaction to the group and mitigated to a great extent the disappointment over the exam paper at the end of Stage II, because the children produced much material which showed that they had come to terms with the main ideas of the work and were able to produce interesting and appropriately varied texts when given the opportunity. Pleasing examples of this were the results of reversing the contextual exercises in Stage II. Instead of providing texts and asking the children to identify the participants, we gave them a list of participants and invited them to supply short texts which would enable their classmates to identify the participants, e.g.

Policeman to burglar.
Housewife to coalman.
Band-leader to band.
Referee to players and so on.

The inventiveness, economy, and sense of appropriateness displayed in this were very encouraging. Band-leader to band, e.g. precipitated an interested discussion in one class where one of the texts produced was,

" On the fourth beat the stringed instruments will start," and another the much more ingenious and appropriate

"A1, A2, A1234."

The extension of this sort of exercise into the writing of convincing dialogue and scripted plays seems a natural and inevitable development.

Translation exercises of various kinds proved interesting and valuable; e.g. translating an account of a simple experiment into a set of instructions for carrying it out, translating a piece of historical narrative into a first person contemporary account of the incident, translating an extract from their geography book into a holiday brochure's description of the same place. The range is unlimited and the exercises help to expose to the pupils and to the teacher the points at which grammatical choices have to be made and where a consideration of these is therefore useful and pertinent; e.g. we gave classes the following simple account of an experiment:

" Their father brought some ice from the refrigerator and put it in a glass. When the ice began to melt they put the thermometer bulb in the water and the top of the liquid in the tube stopped at the place marked ' Freezing Point ' or 32°. They then held it in the steam over the boiling water in a kettle and the liquid went to ' Boiling Point ' or 212° "

and asked them to re-write it as a set of instructions for carrying out the experiment. Most of them adopted the appropriate form of a series of imperatives taken step by step, e.g.

Take some ice from the refrigerator.
Put it in a glass.
Wait till the ice starts to melt.
Put the thermometer bulb in the water.

The most interesting part of the exercise to the group was the next step in the instructions, because here the children were confronted by a grammatical problem and many of the manuscripts were at this point marked by scorings out, vigorous use of the rubber, and other evidences of a choice having to be made. The poorer ones just ignored the problem and continued with, " The top of the liquid in the tube *stopped* at the place marked Freezing Point or 32°,"

but the majority realised that this would not do, and offered solutions like,

" The top of the liquid in the tube *will stop* (or *should stop*) at the place marked " Freezing Point " or 32°.

One or two of the pupils offered the very sophisticated,

" Observe (or note) where top of the liquid in the tube stops."

It is when situations like these arise that discussion with the class can be directly related to their needs, and some clarity may creep into the Memorandum's statement that " The consideration of sentence structure, which is a more sophisticated progress, should be associated with pattern and function." Translation exercises provide problems and opportunities far wider than merely grammatical ones, but this seems sufficient to exemplify the principle.

SUMMARY

It seemed to the group that working by a head on approach to the problems of language variety offered several advantages over the normal approach to formal skills via a scheme of work in grammar and the other conventions with the items and the order in which they are considered, somewhat arbitrarily selected and often dealt with in isolation from and with little effect on, the other reading and writing which the class may be doing. These are:

1. That real texts—examples of language in actual use—are considered, and that the range of material which the children read is thereby extended.
2. That the approach enables the children to discover with the teacher's co-operation certain aspects of the nature of language, rather than being told these things and then asked to imitate them.
3. That it helps the teacher and the class to discover for themselves what grammar they need, when they need it, and to what obviously useful end they can deploy this knowledge, and these are surely the questions which are arousing most puzzlement and controversy at the moment in the minds of teachers of English, in the area of formal skills.
4. That these suggestions offer a framework of general guidance within which there is a great deal of scope for the inventiveness and resource of both teacher and children in co-operation.
5. That the range of productive work, as well as reading, by the children is extended, and that this often opens up areas in which children who are not markedly successful in more formal composition can and do display skill and imagination of a surprising and satisfying sort.

The group, Messrs Gilmour, Bryan, Bowie, Smith and Milgrew, are teachers in Ayrshire schools, who were involved and to whom I am very grateful, worked under rushed—frequently interrupted conditions — real school circumstances in fact—on this scheme, and many of the ideas and exercises which they tried they would have liked more time to deploy and to experiment with, but even with these reservations they all appreciated the interest and value of the approach, sufficiently to make it seem worth offering, even in this tentative form, for the consideration of anyone else who is, and we all are after all, in the same pretty leaky boat.

GOALS IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAMME

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New approaches to the language arts in the primary school have created some uncertainty as to the teacher's role. This has been likened, unkindly, to "benevolent inertia." (Halliday: 1968.) Certainly the nature of the teacher's "intervention" in the learning process is less clearly defined than it once was. Schemes of work come under attack and the curriculum guides distributed by local education authorities often seem to express a lack of confidence. There is a hedging of bets and one is conscious of an almost audible sigh of relief when the guides come to areas where more formal work is still believed to be appropriate.

Naturally many teachers look around for advice. Recent writing on the language arts is dominated by a comparatively small group of "experts." J. McH. Sinclair comments somewhat bitterly on the domination exercised by writers and lecturers whose own training has been in literary studies. He sees as one result: ". . . permissiveness in the standards of language behaviour, so lamented along the line. The imagination works better unfettered, and the tenuous relationship between the unfettered imagination and control mechanisms is now at very great risk indeed. There is in recent talk about teaching English a hatred showing of any discipline which inhibits private writing, so that in a few years' time we may find primary school teachers in the dilemma of having to teach children to write without being able to interfere with their doodling. . . . With the bias I have described, the literary value and worth of one's production are elevated above other aspects of it. The sort of imaginative integrity in one's production is placed above, for example, its efficiency." (Sinclair: 1968.)

Certainly most recent books on language work in the primary school tend to emphasise activities like creative writing, poetry and use of imaginative fiction. Experts set up global objectives which a teacher may find difficult to translate into classroom terms. We are pedagogic John the Baptists. Religious conversion is easy: keeping the faith going is more difficult. Perhaps we need a dogma in addition to a vision.

"The first step in developing any training programme is to establish the terminal behavior (or behavioral goal) of training. This is a difficult task for the person interested in developing a language training program. However, it seems that the place to start the development of such a program would be with a study of the language characteristics of normal members of the community. . . . Once the language requirements of the community (the terminal behavior of the language program) have been established, the next phase is the development of the intermediate steps." (Spradlin: 1967.)

The first goals in a language training programme might be found in the part that language plays in the intellectual and emotional development of the child. Here we find that new approaches tend to concentrate on certain aspects, the communication of the evidence of the senses or the products of the imagination. There is an ignoring of the cognitive aspects of language and the role it plays in concept formation. (See "Language Programs for the Disadvantaged: Part II.) This is no place to discuss the work of writers like Luria or Vygotsky, but perhaps I may quote briefly from "Language Programs."

"Language has many purposes among which one of the most important, and certainly the most important to the teacher, is the use of language as a means of developing the power of reason. . . . A major function of language is its role in the process of thought, in the assimilation of specific pieces of information into meaningful concepts."

This language role lies at the foot of success in school-work yet there is little explicit reference to it in recent writing on the language arts. Efficiency in this role lies largely in the ability to handle language structures which demonstrate the child's awareness of the relationship between events and less in competence in usage.

I am interested in recent American work done under the "Headstart" programme which is designed to improve the educational performance of disadvantaged children. What is interesting here is not just the Americans' awareness of the importance of experience or "enrichment" programmes, but the explicit importance given to all aspects of language in the development of the child; the attempt to identify the various elements which go to make up language skill; the creation of sequential programmes; the itemising of a large number of activities which encourage these skills. I appreciate that much American work is more formal than ours and that the wholesale adopting of such programmes would have dangers. (The differences between the two systems of education emerge in two books on the recent Dartmouth Seminar; Dixon, 1967; Muller, 1967.) It is easy to bellow the emotive word "Drills!" but these programmes do make the teacher aware of particular skills she should be encouraging. The activities suggested are not necessarily formal and repetitive but are frequently as child-centred as one would wish; they exist happily within experience programmes; they suggest questions which may be incorporated easily in the unstructured activity of the classroom. Not the least of their value is that they make the teacher aware of the relevance of even limited classroom activities to the development of language skills or to intellectual and emotional development.

If we return to the cognitive aspects of language we find that many of these programmes attempt to identify language forms which are critical in this area. To take some limited examples: a contributor to "Language Programs" underlines the importance of encouraging children to use certain structures; affirmative and "not" statements in reply to a question; handling of polar opposites for at least four concept pairs; use of certain named prepositions correctly in statements describing arrangements of objects; performing of simple "if-then" deductions. (Bereiter: 1965.) Such a programme need not mean a return to drilling. The teacher is made aware of the significance of various language forms and is given a series of limited goals she can relate to larger objectives. They suggest the kind of questions a teacher might ask so that a child might structure a particular kind of response. All this can be incorporated in the most liberal language programme. I have given a few random examples,

but I know of no Scottish curriculum guide which attempts this kind of detail. One reason for this is that this kind of programme is not in accord with the prevailing climate in language work in this country. Nevertheless I believe that the combination of details from the more organised American programmes with our own language-experience approach would provide the teacher with a most powerful weapon. What is especially interesting about many of these programmes is that they start with the pre-school child and continue to college-entry. The teacher at any stage is aware of her role in the continuing development of language. (I should point out that these programmes refer to stages in the development of the individual child and not to work suitable for a particular class.) Programmes such as these could provide a "check-list" so that a teacher may more consciously influence a child's acquisition of language and more confidently assess both need and progress over a wide range of language activity.

I have suggested that one set of objectives might be found in the role language plays in the child's development; another might be found in the nature of language itself. The work of Bernstein is a useful starting-point in that it identifies the characteristics of language used by speakers from various socio-economic backgrounds and by implication suggests to teachers those areas of language requiring particular attention. (See Lawton: 1968.) There are several more detailed surveys of children's language available. (Templin, 1964; Loban, 1964; Hunt, 1964.) These indicate sensitive areas in language competence. This kind of survey is of a value to a teacher because it enables her to set up objectives by identifying aspects of language which merit close attention. I am not suggesting that if the reports stress the importance of subordination the teacher should embark on twenty examples of the adverbial clause or on general analysis. They do suggest the kind of language situations in which children might be involved; the kind of models to place before them; the kind of expansion of their natural language which is necessary. I appreciate the difficulty here because of the varied and complex structures used by even young children. (This is one of the drawbacks of the "Alf and Moo" kind of infant's reading book: "Alf see Moo. Moo, see Alf." The structures used in school are often naive when placed beside those used naturally by a child.)

Another set of objectives might come from the uses to which we put language skills. In the case of reading we may identify specific uses; recreational reading; background reading; reading for specific information; close study of a passage, and so on. An awareness of the different uses to which reading, writing and spoken English may be put allows a teacher to structure thematic work more effectively. Again it ensures that all aspects of language use have been involved. It also suggests the kind of situation which will call a particular skill into use.

Yet another set of objectives might come from constructing a profile of expected terminal behaviour and of behaviour at intermediate stages. (This next section is adapted from "Sequential Levels of Reading Skill": New York.) The final stage of reading ability could be that a child is reading extensively for information and pleasure; he is interested in his reading experiences and applies the skills he has learned; he uses reading increasingly as a tool for gathering and organizing information; he recognizes that the nature of the material and the purpose of his reading determine the rate and thoughtfulness with which he reads; he is aware of the contextual meaning of words familiar to him in other circumstances; he makes increasing use of the organization which non-fiction books provide—maps, diagrams, etc.

An earlier stage could be that the child reads fluently at his independent reading level and shows an interest in various kinds of reading material; he is beginning to read to learn and finds books that he wishes to read and may use school and public libraries; his sight vocabulary is fairly extensive and he uses word-attack skills to unlock longer and more difficult words; he has mastered the essential principles of phonics and structural analysis; he will develop work-study skills which enable him to work on projects; he understands the use of a dictionary; he may begin to vary the rate of reading according to purpose and to organize the information he acquires for his own purpose or for sharing it with others.

These are only two stages. Five or six such stages could cover the range of expected reading abilities in the primary school classroom. Again this helps the teacher to plan objectives and review the effectiveness of her own work.

The last set of objectives might come from

the component parts of particular language skills. To take a limited example; it could be argued that some of the interpretative skills involved in reading are the ability to get the main thought; the ability to find and relate details to this; the ability to determine sequence; the ability to draw inferences from what is read.

Once such skills have been identified it is possible to set up a programme designed to foster them. To take a few examples; if a teacher accepts that it is important that a child should get the main thought of a passage then the first stage might be an infant teacher telling a story and asking: "What was that story about?" The final stage might be a child making a generalization on the basis of his awareness of the main thoughts from a number of different sources in project work. These are essentially the same skills at different levels. In finding and relating details, the first stage might be a teacher asking a class to find certain significant details in a story; the final stage might be a pupil grouping together related ideas under a main thought expressed as a general statement—the kind of activity he might meet naturally in history or science.

In determining sequence an infant might answer the questions: "What happened first? What happened next?" or put a number of related pictures in a sequence. A later stage might be a pupil in project work recording details according to a sequence given by the teacher — chronological in history; cause and effect in science—or having to select a suitable sequence in which to communicate directions, a science experiment, rules of the game, and so on. In drawing inferences an infant might be expected to predict the outcome of a story or the behaviour of one of the characters in it. "What do you think the little boy will do now?" A more competent child might deal with figurative or allegorical material.

It should be possible to isolate a number of component skills in language and arrange their employment in such a sequence.

All this has been a skimming of the surface. There is a great deal of information about language now available which could be of considerable value to the teacher if it were brought together in an ordered way. I am not advocating a new formalism, but there is some truth in the comment in "Language Programs" that the average teacher knows as much about language as a quack doctor knows about medicine.

Such a programme could highlight the critical areas in language; it would allow the teacher to set up precise objectives and to review children's progress; it would relate a number of classroom techniques to the development of language skills over a wide area.

This programme should be seen as being for the guidance of teachers; it would not provide a series of exercises for children. Such a programme, which would allow the teacher to structure her class programme, would seem to be necessary as the teacher's professional training relegates language knowledge to a comparatively subordinate role.

In many areas of language work we just do not have sufficient information yet we take up entrenched positions. Our attitudes to language work may be largely based on faith—or prejudice; they are seldom amenable to proof. Despite my own sympathies I have to recognise that there are certain researches that seem to question the effectiveness of language-experience approaches and that some teachers are uncertain of their effectiveness with children of low ability. We cannot dismiss too easily the conclusions they draw from their experience.

There is a tendency to "plug" certain approaches, such as thematic organization, which cannot of *themselves* guarantee success in language work. Certainly thematic organisation can revolutionise a language programme, but ultimately it is the quality of the language material and the opportunities it presents which are important—not the method itself. The danger is that such methods may divert attention from language aims.

It is important not to ignore certain areas as the present emphasis on creative methods may encourage us to do. Equally the classroom techniques we adopt should not lead us to do the work of the social studies department —easier though that may be. The investigation of areas of human experience is only one of our functions. Our own interests and backgrounds may lead us to emphasize social and individual values at the expense of our other functions—and this is particularly true of secondary teachers. Now these values are important to us as teachers, but all of us have roles in which we are specifically *teachers of language*. That is why, in addition to the more general objectives we share with all teachers, we should seek our own objectives in the role of language in

the life of the individual or in society and in the nature of language itself—and I should not have to stress that such language objectives must include literature and what has been called " creative " English.

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AN APPROACH TO READING AND LITERATURE

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Children in the upper classes of primary schools have plenty of opportunities to read fiction written at their own level — they have access to books in their class or school library and in their public library, and many have books bought for them at home, at least for birthdays or for Christmas. But what part does this reading play in a child's classroom activity? Sometimes a novel he reads may be "reviewed" by the pupil; sometimes a teacher may read parts or all of a novel to a class; but little more is done with what is, after all, a major part of most children's reading activity. "It's only a novel" — the disparaging remark of Jane Austen's character echoes what is quite a common attitude to children's fiction.

Many children in this age-group do read widely. What we want, as teachers, is to encourage more of them to find enjoyment in well-written stories written at their own level, to direct their reading to books that we feel will offer them intellectual and emotional satisfaction, and to develop their imaginative response to what they read. We decided to use a novel written for children as the basis for a class's work in English over a period of several weeks; this article gives, very briefly, our reasons for doing this, and tries to give some idea of the novel, the possibilities we saw in it, and what was in fact achieved in the classroom.

It is a common criticism of English textbooks, whether class readers or books of comprehension or language exercises, that the work they present for children is arbitrarily selected, and not related to other work being done by the class — the present emphasis is on integrated studies, centres of interest, etc. This sort of approach has one disadvantage from the point of view of the teacher especially interested in English, that the subjects chosen often offer little opportunity for the study of imaginative writing. It was therefore hoped, by making a novel the focal point of a class's interest over a short period, to keep the advantage of the centre-of-interest approach (a sense of unity and continunity in the work undertaken) while placing an emphasis on " English " work.

Principles of Selection

1. We decided to look for a children's novel that would be thought worth reading by an upper primary class without any "soft-selling" by their teacher. We assumed that a fairly strong plot line and a group of clearly-defined central characters would be important requirements by this age-group.

2. We felt that interest would be easier to sustain, if the book stated initially a problem to be overcome, or a mystery to be solved. Also, as it would be read over a period of time, it must be sufficiently episodic to allow for serial presentation.

3. Since the class had not worked in this way before, we thought it desirable, on this occasion, to choose a novel in one of the main traditions of children's fiction; by this, we hoped to gain the advantage of the familiar-seeming.

4. We decided, from the teachers' point of view, that the book chosen should be sufficiently well-written and of sufficient (though indefinable!) intrinsic quality, to repay a close study of selected passages, allow for class discussion on matters arising from the text, and provide a writing stumulus for the children.

5. As the novel was going to be edited for our own purposes, and some parts would be read to the class, others discussed, others studied intensively, we did not need to choose a book of uniform excellence.

"Carrigmore Castle" by Meta Mayne Reid (Faber, 8/6d) was felt to meet our criteria. It is clearly a "traditional" children's novel (a group adventure involving fantasy). Although it has weaknesses (most obviously, in the dialogue), it offers ample compensations—three plausibly characterised children as its main actors, and an exciting, carefully structured plot. And, for the teacher, there are varied opportunities for class discussion, writing work, and dramatisation.

Outline of the Book

Colly McKean (11) and his brother Kay (10) live near deserted Carrigmore Castle, built about 150 years ago but rumoured to occupy the site of a much older castle dating back to Viking times. Their cousin Charlotte, whose father has recently died, comes to live with them; her mother hopes to get work nearby, and Charlotte is to keep an eye open for a likely house for her mother and her. The McKean cat, Tiffany, has magical powers. She can speak (only to the three children), is intelligent and rather haughty, and initiates them into white magic. Under her guidance, they drink well-water, eat hazel buds from Finn's Hazel of Knowledge, and are granted supranatural perceptions and, occasionally, powers. When they first explore the castle, they encounter bats (symbols of destructive power) and find themselves committed to restoring Carrigmore to its former happy state. For a long time, the forces of decay looking like winning, and it is only when friendly and public-spirited adults can be won over that a happy ending is assured—the discovery by the children of a Viking runestone leads various societies to combine their interests to save Carrigmore, the bats are driven from the castle, it becomes a Youth Hostel, and Charlotte's mother becomes the caretaker.

The above sketch misses out many of the incidents which make the book enjoyable to read, but may give some hint of the possibilities that attracted us to it. Here are fear (caused by the emptiness of the castle and the evil strength of the bats, and also by more practical problems like getting marooned on a tidal lough) and its conquest; here are three children growing into self-reliance, and yet clearly children still; here are decay and disuse, and the need to fight against them. Archaelogy, history, nature study, travelling in time, and magic are all interests that could be stimulated by reading this book. Clearly, it could be itself a centre of interest in the least forced sense of that overused phrase—the book is the centre, the hub, and, in the course of reading it, the class may get involved in various studies arising out of it, and may pursue them via reference books and information supplied by the teacher.

Outline of Our Procedure

It was decided to take this book with a class as follows. Twelve sections were chosen, each about 4-6 pages in length, to be read to the children; we saw writing and other possibilities in most of these sections, but the main reason for selecting them was to give the children a clear idea of the development of the story. (Sometimes the section to be read consisted of two or three parts of a chapter brought together, and not one piece of continuous prose). In addition to these sections, seven shorter passages were chosen (1-1½ quarto pages, double-spaced) to be cyclostyled and issued to the class; these

would be used for intensive study. We envisaged that discussion would arise from both the shorter passages and also some of the sections read, and that writing stimulus would be provided. For example, the first cyclostyled passage describes the children's first impressions of Carrigmore, and their reaction to a general sense of decay—we hoped here, by discussion of the moods aroused by different places at different times, to lead the children to write about their own reactions in similar circumstances. We were also aware of the possibilities of involving the children in dramatic work arising from certain incidents in the book.

Classroom Report (David Valentine)

Mrs Logie, headmistress of Polmont Primary School, allowed me to try out our ideas for "Carrigmore Castle" with her own class, a mixed P6-P7 class of 32 children, with an I.Q. range of 79-126.

Because of the short time I had for this (twelve sessions of about seventy minutes each, spread over three weeks), I decided not to use the book as a basis for work in subjects other than English. Also, since the class was at that time getting ample interpretation practice from an S.R.A. Reading Laboratory (IIA), I decided not to use any material from the book for written interpretation. In different circumstances I would certainly want to include such work, based on the cyclostyled passages.

I attempted, having seventy minutes per session, to vary any single day's programme, so that a typical session might involve (1) reading to the class or cyclostyled passage; oral interpretation; (2) class discussion arising from (1); (3) writing, on topic suggested by what had been read or discussed; (4) further reading, without, this time, any discussion.

Perhaps a clearer idea of the approach we were interested in can be got from a more detailed description of the work done on the first cyclostyled passage, referred to earlier. Here (pp. 20-21 of the text) the children are exploring the castle, and to begin with are in the kitchen at the back. The passage builds up an atmosphere of decay and unpleasantness, and a mood of the eerie and sinister. Part of this mood is conveyed by accurate descriptive detail, part of it by imagery suggestive of menace. (e.g. "Paper was peeling off the walls, and stirred uneasily in the draught. A cupboard panel had warped, and gaped at them like a twisted mouth.") The children respond to this atmosphere—they "talk in whispers"; one of them "jumps nervously." The passage ends when they escape to the front of the castle, to the "mellow" and totally "different" hall.

In oral discussion of this passage, I started by asking the questions—how do the children feel? how do we *know* they are afraid? This question required the class to look closely at the text, and pick from it the incidental descriptions of what the children said and did, since the passage's main emphasis is on the building, not the children's reaction. My next question was—why are they afraid? And the general answer, "because it's a spooky place," was the starting-point for close examination of the detail of the passage. The class quoted to support their general impression—we agreed, for example, that "grimed, fly-blown" windows were unpleasant—and were able to isolate those details which conveyed more than just unpleasantness. This led us to an examination of the imagery of menace, with the class commenting on how the author was producing her effects.

Our examination of the last paragraph of this passage, where the contrasting mood of the hall is sketched in, led us to discuss, at a general level, the moods of different buildings, with the children being led to draw on their own experiences. From buildings the discussion widened to include places, still within their experience, and to the possibly changing moods of one place at different times. (The walk home from school or bus-stop was referred to by several children—unexceptional by day, but frightening by night.)

Following our discussion, the children were asked to write about a place they knew, in such a way as to make it seem happy or frightening to the reader, without actually saying that it was. Most chose the second possibility. The following is an example, a good one, of what was produced.

"The road was long and twisted, dark and neglected. No familiar rays of light shone on my path, no white lines greeted my every movement. Great, green walls, alive and growing, lined my path. A breeze blew, a crisp bag fluttered behind me, the wind blowing it towards me. A great, gaping, dead tree spread its branches over the road. An owl hooted somewhere in the vast terrain."

"Carrigmore Castle" had struck us as offer-

ing varied opportunities for drama work. I began this on an obvious set piece in ch. 3, where the three children try to sell orphan kittens at the local market: the episode involves a large number of characters, and as it consists of a sequence of minor incidents, could easily be broken up, and the various parts discussed and enacted separately, with the class's recollection of the dialogue of the novel providing a basis for their own improvised dialogue. After this we went back to the first encounter with the bats, and the class in their groups mimed the menace and the fear. Other dramatic incidents were similarly dealt with.

I felt that the drama work was especially profitable, letting the children identify with the central figures of the book, and so get the "feel" of it.

We had also planned to use a considerable amount of supplementary reading material. For reasons of time, I cut down on this, but reluctantly, and where I thought it particularly appropriate, I did add to a cyclostyled passage the imaginative experience of a poem or prose excerpt where a different witer could be seen working out his attitude to a similar situation or emotion.

Conclusions

The idea of using a novel for the sort of work in English outlined briefly above would seem, on the inadequate evidence of our work with "Carrigmore Castle," to be a fruitful one. Certainly, this P. 6-7 class seemed to enjoy working on the book, and the coninuity of interest afforded by a novel seemed an advantage.

It seems worth observing that this book was not chosen because of any obvious literary merit. It is a novel which children enjoy reading, but is by no means outstanding. We would like to suggest that a teacher selecting a better-written book would find it at least as rewarding.

Finally, we would like to thank Mrs Logie of Polmont Primary School, not only for giving us the chance to work with her class, but for the interest she maintained, and the active part she played, in what we were doing.

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